

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1556

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, March 15, 2007

Title: An act relating to designating the Walla Walla sweet onion as the official Washington state vegetable.

Brief Description: Designating the Walla Walla sweet onion as the official Washington state vegetable.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Grant, Haler, Sells, Springer, O'Brien, Seaquist, Ahern, Takko, Williams, Ericks, Roberts, Strow, Linville, Ormsby and McDermott.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/14/07, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/15/07 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton and Shin.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Walla Walla Sweet onions are grown in Walla Walla County in southeastern Washington and a part of Umatilla County in northeastern Oregon.

Nine states have designated official state vegetables, including three onions: the Vidalia Sweet onion (Georgia), the Texas Sweet onion (Texas), and the Spanish Sweet onion (Utah).

The Washington Legislature has designated several state symbols, including a state fruit, the apple.

Summary of Bill: The Walla Walla Sweet onion is designated the official state vegetable.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is entirely appropriate to designate the Walla Walla Sweet onion as the state vegetable. It is an important part of Washington's agricultural economy and has a unique, historically-significant association with the state. It has many health benefits, is delicious prepared several ways in a wide variety of dishes, and serves as an apt, multi-layered symbol of the state's diverse population. Onions in general have been highly regarded for millenia and were savored by the man for whom our state was named, who once observed "The onion is the most favored food that grows."

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Walsh, prime sponsor; Alex Hansen, Eatonville Middle School teacher; Jordan Davis, Hannah Andruscik, Alexi Osterhaus, Mackenzie Glisson, Lacey Longpre, Danielle White, Eatonville Middle School students.